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NOTES AND DISCUSSION.

A Mediæval School of Massorites among the Jews of England.

—It has hitherto been assumed that Moses ha-Nakdan of London, author of the Massoretic notes termed ררכי הנקוד which are found attached to all Rabbinic Bibles, is identical with Moses ben Isaac Hanassiah of London, author of the grammatical treatise ס' השהם, part of which has been edited by the Rev. G. W. Collins. The identification at first sight has much for it; it seems so unlikely that there should be two Moses of London living about the same time and writing about the same subjects in similar terms. But an entry in a Berlin manuscript of the ררכי הנקוד causes me to suspect separate authorship for the two works, and enables me to connect Moses ha-Nakdan with an Anglo-Jewish family with which I have also been much connected—by way of literary research—during the past two years. The colophon of the Berlin manuscript of the ררכי הנקוד runs thus: סליק יסוד הר"ם ביהר יום טוב מלניטש (see Steinschneider *Cut. Berl. Heb. MSS.*, p. 54.) Now this R. Moses ben Yomtob is actually mentioned by Moses ben Isaac in the ס' השהם as his teacher (col. 37, ed. Collins), and there can therefore be no reason to doubt the attribution of the Berlin manuscript. Prof. Bacher has also shown that the author of the ררכי הנקוד is also the author of some notes on Joseph Kimchi's ס' הזכרון (*Revue des études juives*, xii. 371), and these again may be attributed to Moses ben Yomtob.

If we know little about Moses ben Yomtob, or about his father, Yomtob of London, who is casually referred to as flourishing c. 1175 by Zunz (*Zur. Gesch.*, 193), we may know a great deal about his sons, for they figured as the chief English Jews of the thirteenth century. I ventured to name them the Hagin family in my "London Jewry"; one of them Elyas, was the most prominent figure in the early history of the Jews in this country. Dr. Berliner has shown that in a Response of Elyas he quotes another of his father signed R. Moses ben Yomtob, which clinches the relationship (*Heb. Gedichte Meir aus Norwich*, p. 6). The date of Moses ben Yomtob is settled by the *floruit* of his sons, which ranges from 1230 to 1290, so that Moses must have lived in the later years of the twelfth and the beginning years of the thirteenth century. This also chimes in with the date of his father Yomtob given by Zunz, unfortunately without reference.

The date of the other R. Moses (ben Isaac Hanassiah), the author of the ס' השהם, or "Onyx Book," can also be established by a very curious coincidence. In 1215, during the troubles between John and the Barons, the latter took possession of London, and to strengthen the walls took some of the burial stones out of the Jewyn Garden or Jews' cemetery, then just outside the walls. One of these stones was discovered in Elizabeth's time, and the inscription copied by or for Stowe in his Survey of London, as follows:—

מצבת[ת] ר' משה בן הרב יצחק הי'

There can be little doubt that this was the author of the ס' השהם who must therefore have died before 1215, and Moses ben Yomtob, his master, must have been at work some time before that date.

In making some researches among the inedited Pipe Rolls or Treasury accounts of the twelfth century at the Record Office, I have come across a couple of items which to my mind confirm this date, and determine the

family of R. Moses ben Isaac *Hanassiah*, besides throwing light on many interesting collateral points. Mr. M. D. Davis has already suggested that the curious hybrid form *הנשיאה* is an attempt at a translation of *La Comtessa* (Renan-Neubauer, *Les Rabbinis Français*, p. 745), a name not infrequent among the Jewesses of England. The best known of them, one Comitissa of Cambridge, is mentioned as having obliged Richard of Anesty with a loan, c. 1159. In a Pipe Roll of 15 Hen. II. (1168-9), the same Comitissa is fined for having married one of her sons to a Lincoln Jewess, and in 25 Hen. II. (1178-9), I have found that three Lincoln Jews pay a fine to be released of their pledges on behalf of "Isaac fil Comitisse." Here then we have the father of R. Moses ben Isaac *Hanassiah*, the author of the "Onyx Book." Isaac must have married before 1168, about which date we can fix the date of birth of his son Moses. This is confirmed by another curious entry I have come across relating to a Jew from Russia being in England. For in the Pipe Roll of 27 Hen. II. (1180-1) there is a mention of an "Ysaac de Russie." Now R. Moses ben Isaac says that he had heard from R. Iza of Tchernigoff the Russian term for brother-in-law (Harkavy, *Die Juden und die Slavischen Sprachen*, p. 62), and there can be little doubt that this is the "Ysaac de Russie" referred to in the Pipe Rolls. Moses must have been between twelve and fifteen years old when this Ysaac visited England, and his life can therefore be fixed as ranging between 1165 and 1215, and the date of the *ד' ה'ש"ה* at 1200. The date happens to be exceptionally important, as it fixes that of Berachyah Hanakdan, who is quoted by R. Moses. The long-standing dispute between Drs. Neubauer and Steinschneider on the date of Berachyah (*Rabbins*, pp. 490-9, *Letterbode*, viii. 25) may now be settled by these entries from the Pipe Rolls. I have also found another Punctator quoted by R. Moses in the *ד' ה'ש"ה*. This is Samuel Hanakdan, who appears as "Samuel le Pointeur" in a list of Bristol Jews paying tallage in 1194. He was also the author of a Massoretic book now lost. There seems, indeed, to have been quite a school of Massorites or Nakdanim in England in the twelfth century; almost all those known at that time being thus shown to be from this country. It was, therefore, appropriate that Abraham ibn Ezra, in enumerating the various tastes of Jewish scholars in his *Yesod Moreh*, written in England in 1158, should begin with the Massora. Under these circumstances it is not unlikely that the greatest of the Nakdanim, Berachyah, the author of the *משלי שועלים*, was also a native or resident of this country. The earliest quotation from him is now shown to be in the *ד' ה'ש"ה*, the work of an English Jew, and his other chief work is a translation of the *Questiones Naturales* of an Englishman, Adelard of Bath. "Crispia," the Hebrew surname of Berachyah, is sufficiently near to "Crispin," a frequent surname among English Jews, and I find a *Benedict Crispin* the most important personage in a list of Canterbury Jews in the Pipe Roll of 4 Rich. I. (1193-4), and we know Canterbury to have been a seat of Hebrew learning; a David and a Benjamin of Canterbury occur among the meagre list of English Rabbis. The date and everything agree to make it extremely likely that this Benedict Crispin is Berachyah Crispia. I may add that a work containing many fables also contained in the *משלי שועלים* was written in French by Marie de France in England at the court of Henry II. just about the time when Berachyah Hanakdan, as we have just seen, must have flourished. I have little hesitation in saying that these are as clear proofs of identification as we ever get for Jews of this early date.